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Intercultural and interreligious dialogue

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of activities carried out by the main United Nations entities involved in the field of dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations. The report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/226, covers a wide range of topics, including the new Programme of Action adopted by UNESCO, the Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, communication, awareness-raising and educational activities in promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, increased recognition of indigenous cultures, as well as a rights-based approach to the issue.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report, which is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/226, sets out the main activities carried out by the United Nations system in support of dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations since the adoption of the resolution in 2011.

2. As in the past, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations have played a leadership role in their efforts to promote dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Their work is presented first in the present report, which also shows how United Nations agencies have used the catalytic effect of culture to promote the United Nations development goals. Many United Nations entities have tackled the issue of interfaith dialogue and its corresponding influence on youth, education, health, HIV/AIDS prevention and other challenges. Dialogues surrounding indigenous peoples' culture are also featured on the agenda of many United Nations organizations; therefore, this matter is presented in a specific section. Finally, the dialogue on cultures and faiths is examined through the lens of a human rights approach.

3. The report is based on contributions from UNESCO, the Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the World Bank. Within the United Nations Secretariat, the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are the entities most involved in these matters.

II. Renewed involvement of UNESCO in support of intercultural dialogue

4. UNESCO renewed and furthered its action for intercultural dialogue in line with General Assembly resolution 66/226, in which the General Assembly noted the continuing work of UNESCO in those fields and welcomed in particular the adoption of its new Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence and its focus on concrete actions at the global, regional and subregional levels.

5. The new Programme of Action, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its thirty-sixth session in November 2011 is aimed at, inter alia, enhancing intercultural dialogue, as well as interreligious dialogue which is an important component of the wider engagement to promote dialogue among cultures and civilizations. In the Programme of Action, advantage is taken of the lessons learned in the implementation of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010) and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), the tenth anniversary of which in 2011 contributed to reasserting the values of dialogue and diversity. Indeed, UNESCO has a specific mandate covering five critical areas (education, science, culture, communication and

information) conducive to mutual understanding by establishing pluralist and inclusive environments thanks to a genuine and sustainable dialogue among cultures and religions, as well as between believers and non-believers. The framework for this holistic approach to dialogue is contained in the recently published brochure entitled *A New Cultural Policy Agenda for Development and Mutual Understanding: Key Arguments for a Strong Commitment to Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*.

6. UNESCO reaffirmed its role as a promoter of intercultural and interreligious dialogue on the following occasions of the celebration of: the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development; the International Day for Tolerance, with the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-violence having been awarded in 2011 to Anarkali Honaryar for her work in the promotion of the rights of women and religious and ethnic minorities in Afghanistan; the International Day of Nowruz, which is part of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; and the International Day of Peace; among other such events. Conferences have been held on humanism and its potential for revisiting the ethical foundations of globalization through dialogues between cultural and religious traditions, including Confucianism. The South-South Philosophical Dialogue has gathered international philosophers from four regions of the South: Africa; the Arab world; Asia and the Pacific; and Latin America. UNESCO remained mobilized for high-level events on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, such as the Fourth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held in Kazakhstan in 2012, and the UNESCO High-level Panel on Peace and Dialogue among Cultures, the third session of which, scheduled to be held on 16 November 2012, is expected to be an important opportunity to discuss new ways of realizing peace through dialogue.

7. UNESCO enhanced its action on the dimensions of education pertaining to human rights and peace, as well as intercultural competencies, and launched an initiative on guidelines for global citizenship education, which is aimed at disseminating the values of respect for human rights and cultural diversity in all learning contexts. Different projects to facilitate intercultural understanding, such as guidelines for educators to address Islamophobia and a new volume in the UNESCO series of General and Regional Histories, entitled *Islam in the World Today*, have been implemented. In April 2012, an international seminar on intercultural dialogue and education was organized by UNESCO to help the educational communities of the Russian Federation better manage cultural diversity in schools and programmes, notably with respect to ethnic minorities.

8. The fortieth anniversary of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage created an opportunity to actively promote heritage as a resource for dialogue. A new global initiative entitled "Culture: a bridge to development" has been launched to create networks among professionals, civil society and decision makers, starting with South-East Europe, in order to foster dialogue through urban, economic and social development projects. New activities have been developed pursuant to resolutions adopted in November 2011 at the thirty-sixth session of the UNESCO General Conference concerning the designation of 30 April as International Jazz Day and the proclamation of the fourth week of May as International Arts Education Week.

9. UNESCO worked to demonstrate how social inclusion and dialogue reinforce each other, notably when it comes to increasing the participation of women and youth in their positive capacity as promoters of peace. In this context, in Tunisia for example a gender-sensitive training manual on democracy that targets young women and men between 18 and 24 years of age was developed in a participatory manner with the support of national and international experts, young people and representatives of civil society. That manual is in the process of being adapted to different countries in the framework of the "Arab Spring" and beyond. Important activities were also planned in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean.

10. The role of mass media and social media, as strategic tools to create positive perceptions of different cultures and religions of the world, is a major area of work for UNESCO. It carries out that work through capacity-building and empowerment of media professionals to ensure the building of inclusive dialogue within societies. Some important projects are being carried out, such as in Africa to address religious conflicts (Nigeria) or to help building peace through the reconstruction of cultural identity (South Sudan and Uganda) and in Latin America and the Caribbean to promote cultural diversity.

III. Sharpened focus on the activities of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

11. In its fifth operational year, the Alliance has sharpened its activity to focus on five key objectives, running across its four areas of action (education, media, youth and migration): (a) facilitate the global conversation on living together in diversity; (b) promote policy changes; (c) prevent intercultural crises; (d) support innovative bridge-building initiatives at the grass-roots level; and (e) mobilize broad public support for cultural diversity, tolerance and inclusion. Under the continuing co-sponsorship of Spain and Turkey, this political initiative of the Secretary-General has been further developed as one of the premier platforms for forging political will and mobilizing concerted action for intercultural dialogue. Through the Group of Friends, 110 countries, 23 international organizations and a steadily growing number of civil society partners now enable the Alliance, under the stewardship of the High Representative, Jorge Sampaio, to operate as a global matchmaker, a mobilizing force and a creative laboratory for intercultural understanding and cooperation.

12. The fourth Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, held in Doha in December 2011, reflected that evolution, as it brought together 2,500 representatives from all constituencies to simultaneously expand the global conversation — in that instance predominantly on the role of intercultural dialogue in boosting development — review progress on ongoing activities and launch new cooperative efforts. Cultural diversity was affirmed as a pillar under the broadening concept of sustainable development. As a result, the Alliance and its partners will seek to prioritize new action in regions where the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals may be made easier by addressing prejudices and discrimination. The Forum in Doha brought about a new balance between a broadening of the Alliance's agenda, combined with a further geographical opening, and continued focus on improving relations within and between Western and Muslim societies. At the Forum new opportunities were considered for pluralism

and citizens' participation in Arab countries in transition, while the issues of violence and discrimination on religious grounds were addressed across the overall membership of the Alliance. The Fifth Global Forum will be held in Vienna in late February 2013. It will promote responsible leadership in diversity and dialogue.

13. Throughout the year, progress in achieving the objectives of the Alliance was sought through more numerous national plans, incorporating minimum standards for good governance of cultural diversity, consolidation of regional efforts and the expansion of programmes which are implemented with partners, including international organizations, corporations, foundations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A new action plan was adopted for South-East Europe. The Alliance's Regional Strategy on Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation for the Mediterranean proved to be an opportune framework, notably on the media and experiences in transition. Various forms of regional consultation are in progress in Latin America, Central Asia and the eastern part of the Asian and Pacific region in endeavours to promote decentralized ownership.

14. The pioneering role of the Alliance continued in efforts to amplify the constructive role of the media for improving understanding of divisive issues. Those efforts include a dramatically expanded online resource for journalists (Global Experts), syndication of articles, webcasts, consultations with media owners and media trainings. A clearinghouse and a joint UNESCO-United Nations Alliance of Civilizations network of universities has reached maturity in helping beneficiaries to become discerning media users and producers, which is a condition for achieving mutual understanding.

15. The Alliance strongly encouraged youth participation in local and international intercultural efforts, including in the context of an interactive thematic debate in the United Nations General Assembly. In parallel, it offered enlarged support through grants for bridge-building youth initiatives in the Middle East and North Africa region, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (Youth Solidarity Fund). In partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and others, the Alliance started to address the issue of poor and biased communication on migrants, which is a source of intercultural tension.

16. A number of cross-cutting projects deserve attention in the Alliance's combination of approaches to deliver on its five objectives. The Intercultural Innovation Award, created together with the BMW Group, attracted 400 applications; among the winning initiatives were some from Brazil, Canada, Israel and Palestine, the replication and scaling-up of which were assisted. The third Plural+ Youth Video Festival on migration, diversity and social inclusion illustrated the role of youth as agents of social change; winning videos were used to feed discussions in classrooms and networks. A timely fellowship programme has been firmly established: it exposes emerging leaders from Arab countries to the societies and institutions of a diversity of Western countries, and vice versa. The Alliance's Summer School is expanding rapidly; it will soon have sessions in four countries. The Dialogue Café videoconferencing network is enlarging; it will eventually connect citizens and students in universities around the world. With UNESCO and other partners, including some Silicon Valley companies, the Alliance started to reach out to millions on the World Day for Cultural Diversity through the campaign entitled "Do one thing for diversity".

17. The creation of the Partners Forum in Istanbul on 31 May 2012 gave these projects a boost, and public and private donors a voice in the governance of a more sustainable Alliance. These projects will also benefit from improved synergies with United Nations agencies and departments; many of them are relevant to efforts by the High Representative to strengthen the Alliance as a soft power for dialogue and peace.

18. The Alliance paid increased attention to the influence of religion on peace and development, an issue addressed by conferences in Cordoba, Spain, and Florence, Italy, in 2010 and 2011. It took part in informal consultations with faith-based initiatives on a variety of topics. The Alliance played an active role in the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Religious freedom will be featured on the Alliance's agenda at the upcoming Vienna Forum, as a contribution to the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18.

IV. Promoting intercultural dialogue through communication and development activities

A. Outreach and communication activities of the United Nations Department of Public Information

19. The Department of Public Information has used a variety of communication tools, including international days and celebrations, that enable the spreading of peace messages and the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

20. The Department promoted the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development within the official framework of the previously mentioned "Do one thing" campaign among its NGO community and the United Nations Academic Impact network. The Department continues to engage civil society in intercultural and interreligious dialogue and related issues through its briefing programme for NGOs and students, including on such themes as "Indigenous rights, mining and development: the need for free, prior and informed consent" and "Our year, our voice: building partnerships and advancing dialogue with youth across generations", held in observance of the International Year of Youth.

21. As part of its ongoing outreach initiative on "unlearning intolerance", which promotes intercultural dialogue for building peace and understanding among people of different cultures and faiths, United Nations Academic Impact organized a special event to celebrate the first International Jazz Day on 30 April 2012. The event included a panel discussion that focused on jazz as a force for education and dialogue; it was followed by the screening of the film *Finding Carlton: Uncovering the Story of Jazz in India*, a documentary on jazz with a particular focus on the genre in India.

22. The International Day of Peace was marked on 14 September by a symposium hosted by United Nations Academic Impact and organized in partnership with Kyung Hee University, one of its members in the Republic of Korea. Under the theme "Give peace another chance", the symposium featured a round-table discussion on higher education and human dignity that was also video linked to an audience of 3,500 students in Seoul.

23. The theme of the Department's annual international media seminar on peace in the Middle East, held in Geneva on 12 and 13 June 2012, highlighted the role of the media in covering recent events in the Middle East, especially the Arab Spring, and how they relate to the situation in Israel and Palestine. Panel discussions included an examination of women's activism, youth activism and tools, especially digital technologies, for social change and democracy.

24. For the 2012 commemoration of the victims of the genocide in Rwanda, a memorial ceremony was organized at United Nations Headquarters on 11 April, the theme of which was "Learning from history to shape a bright future"; it was followed by the screening of a documentary entitled *Sweet Dreams*. United Nations information centres in 17 countries organized events for the same purpose.

25. To mark Nelson Mandela International Day on 18 July, the Department of Public Information promoted a campaign entitled "Take action: inspire change" through social media, the distribution of postcards and posters in six languages, the screening of short films during an informal meeting of the General Assembly and a volunteer activity at a soup kitchen in New York City. United Nations information centres also organized outreach activities on the Day.

26. In preparation for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on 9 August 2012, the theme of which was "Indigenous media, empowering indigenous voices", the Department of Public Information promoted indigenous video and television productions, helped organize a panel discussion at United Nations Headquarters and raised awareness about the issue through United Nations information centres worldwide.

27. Regular publications are used as a vehicle to promote a culture of peace. The 2011 edition of *Basic Facts about the United Nations* — published in English, French and Japanese, with Azerbaijani, Dutch, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Korean and Spanish versions forthcoming — outlines activities across the United Nations system that promote a culture of peace and protect the rights of disadvantaged or minority groups. Recent issues of the *UN Chronicle* have also included articles on ways to promote an inclusive view of humankind and on the rights of indigenous children. A forthcoming issue will focus on the theme of "Dialogue among civilizations".

28. The 2012 educational calendar, entitled *The United Nations Making a Difference* — a recent addition to the United Nations publications portfolio, issued in all official United Nations languages and Azerbaijani — combines imagery and information in encouraging appreciation of global diversity, including women's rights, and the role of the United Nations in achieving diversity.

B. Role of the United Nations Development Programme in promoting culture for development

29. In 2012, UNDP persistently worked to advance the role of culture for sustainable human development. Its main engagement in this regard continues to be led by activities under the Culture and Development window of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund.

30. That thematic window, with its 18 joint programmes, presents and demonstrates how culture and cultural heritage and assets not only contribute to

national and local economic development but also promote intercultural dialogue and increase social cohesion. The involvement and access facilitation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in creating or strengthening policies and legislative frameworks that promote cultural inclusion and diversity have been key contributions of the Fund in various countries on all continents. UNESCO has led in the design of many of the joint programmes, and the knowledge management initiative for this window has been jointly managed with FAO, the International Labour Organization, the International Trade Centre, UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNFPA, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat), UNICEF, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Health Organization and the World Tourism Organization.

31. A snapshot of the Fund's contributions to policy, legislative frameworks and plans indicates that to date two national laws, eight national policies/strategies and nine subnational plans have been supported. At the national level, the Fund has contributed primarily to national policy and strategies, implementation of international conventions and new legislation and plans, including in the areas of cultural heritage, culture, indigenous peoples and non-discrimination. For example, in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, work has been focused on preparing national strategies on culture in connection with the Alliance of Civilizations. Cultural data have also been collected. To that end, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina approved a "cultural statistics methodology" following a consultation process that involved Government agencies, universities and research institutions in 15 cultural domains. In Ecuador, the Fund has contributed to the participatory design and implementation of gender and intercultural policy to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples. The Fund has also supported countries in the implementation of internationally agreed commitments, such as the Convention on the Promotion of Diversity of Expression in Albania.

32. Under the Fund's thematic window on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, specific contributions have been concentrated in the Balkans area and include the United Nations joint programme entitled "Enhancing inter-ethnic community dialogue and collaboration in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Implemented jointly by UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the programme operates with the support of local bodies and civil society in three cities. In addition, the peacebuilding and inclusive local development programme in Serbia, which is being implemented in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, IOM and the Government of Serbia, is aimed at lowering the risk of conflict by creating stronger, more integrated communities in southern Serbia with greater prosperity and fewer discrepancies in wealth and employment between ethnic groups.

C. Engagement of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in understanding cross-cultural dynamics

33. FAO engaged in a series of efforts to build its understanding and capacities on cross-cultural issues. In June 2012, a seminar entitled "Global diversity programme: understanding cross-cultural dynamics" was organized to raise awareness of global diversity and intercultural dynamics applied to the organization's areas of work.

34. FAO has also implemented activities where cross-cultural dynamics are at play, such as the project entitled "Strengthening community-based institutions for participatory peacebuilding, conflict resolution and recovery planning in Darfur-Sudan". This project was formulated with the aim of bringing together ethnic groups that were in conflict over competition for, or restricted access to, common natural resources. Through a participatory and negotiated territorial development approach, agreements were reached in two communities in North and South Darfur. Dialogue and inclusiveness were key in facilitating peaceful coexistence and free movement of populations, with FAO playing the role of a neutral and honest broker.

V. Promoting interreligious dialogue through cooperation with faith-based organizations

35. The United Nations system promotes interreligious dialogue by engaging with faith-based organizations and involving them in its policy and advocacy activities. Such activities bring together people of different faiths to find solutions to common issues, such as child care, maternal health and HIV/AIDS, and contribute to reaching United Nations development objectives. At United Nations Headquarters, UNFPA chairs the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for the Millennium Development Goals, which convenes policy consultations with academia, faith-based organizations and United Nations entities around common developmental and humanitarian challenges.

A. United Nations Population Fund

36. During the period under review, UNFPA partnered with the United Nations System Staff College, UNDP and UNAIDS to provide strategic exchanges for United Nations management on development, conflict and faith. Central to its rights-based partnerships in respect of the population and development agenda, UNFPA continues its studied engagement with faith-based cultural agents of change, including its Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development, which has more than 500 members.

37. In Africa, UNFPA partners with faith-based organizations to improve the provision of a range of reproductive health needs and to develop shared advocacy concerning women's empowerment, HIV/AIDS prevention, combating gender-based violence and changing social norms relevant to child marriage. Examples of this work include partnerships in Ethiopia with Doctors with Africa Cuamm to increase the number of skilled birth attendants and improve their skills through the creation of a "critical mass" of midwives working as tutors, and equip them to provide basic emergency obstetric care, and in Angola, to improve maternal health services in specific provinces.

38. In the Arab States, UNFPA campaigned with and trained religious communities on women's and girls' sexual and reproductive rights with religious affairs ministries, Islamic universities and various faith-based organizations. Collaboration continues with Al-Azhar University in Egypt to engage youth and female religious leaders in advocacy programmes that advance the Millennium Development Goals, including co-producing a manual on "Islam and development". The first training for female religious leaders was conducted together with shared advocacy against

gender-based violence as part of a United Nations joint programme on making cities safer for women and girls. UNFPA Morocco also collaborated with the senior religious establishment to develop training materials for religious leaders on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, human rights and gender equality, and these materials were disseminated at the national level. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, UNFPA partnered with the Department of Family Counselling and Reconciliation to provide training courses on reproductive health and rights, including domestic violence implications.

39. In the Asian and Pacific region, UNFPA has promoted life-changing and life-saving interventions with a range of communities diverse in culture, language and faith. UNFPA Philippines undertakes a multi-pronged approach to rights-based advocacy for legislative change in the Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines, including awareness-raising on reproductive rights, family planning and women's empowerment among Muslim communities, through religious decrees and sermons. Partnership with the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro, following floods in 2011, also supported the humanitarian efforts of UNFPA in support of the population, including pregnant women.

40. In Bangladesh, some 50,000 religious leaders were oriented on gender equity and equality and on women's empowerment to leverage substantial influence over relevant social norms and needed behavioural change. Attending the orientation were 45,200 imams, 3,800 Hindu religious leaders (sebaits/purohits), 800 Buddhist religious leaders and 200 priests. In a United Nations joint programme to address violence against women, an interfaith platform was created for religious leaders to share strategies to ensure women's rights and religiously grounded ways to combat violence against women. The issues of violence against women and the impact of early marriages have been integrated into the training curricula for both male and female religious leaders.

41. In the Pacific subregion, UNFPA integrated principles of the International Conference on Population and Development into community leadership dialogues. A regional consultation in 2011 provided a common platform where Pacific island statesmen, clergymen and chiefs pledged support for triangular leadership alliances to advocate for population, development and reproductive rights.

42. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 14 of 20 UNFPA offices partner with faith-based organizations. The regional Partnership Network on Population and Development brings together more than 50 representatives of faith-based organizations from 24 countries. Efforts were geared towards exchanging experience and knowledge among network members. An electronic resource centre was established which provided the network members with means to collate research and material linking faith to reproductive health and population issues in those regions.

43. Using town hall meetings as a medium and appointing highly renowned religious scholars as trainers, 1,500 Muslim religious leaders were informed about domestic violence and early marriage complications in Azerbaijan. As part of a South-South sharing of good practices to promote sexual and reproductive health within Muslim communities, UNFPA Kyrgyzstan in partnership with the Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, arranged a study tour for religious leaders, along with representatives of health departments and local authorities, from Afghanistan and Mongolia.

44. UNFPA Armenia has supported the involvement of Armenian priests in combating violence against women and addressing the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination. UNFPA Moldova worked with the Orthodox Church to provide clerical staff with an evidence base and strengthen their outreach services for both the victims and the perpetrators of violence against women. They also cooperated on increasing legal awareness of domestic violence and strengthening communications between religious communities and public authorities.

45. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, UNFPA continues to engage with faith-based organizations and indigenous peoples' organizations to strengthen intercultural approaches to reproductive health and to support national population and development policies. In 2011, there was an increase in programmes with seminaries and universities interested in the fulfilment of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

46. UNFPA recognizes the wisdom of improved advocacy and the strengthening of health systems partly through maintaining strategic and mutually accountable collaboration with faith-based and cultural agents of change. Those agents' combined access to human capital and their critical role in contributing towards the social determinants of development and humanitarian needs may constitute a tipping point for international development cooperation.

B. United Nations Children's Fund

47. During the period under review, UNICEF continued to strengthen its work with multi-religious structures and religious communities to promote the rights of children. In view of the moral authority and extensive networks of religious communities, those groups are critical partners with UNICEF in focusing on equity programming that targets the most disadvantaged children and families.

48. UNICEF published *Partnering with Religious Communities for Children* to support its staff and partners, including other child-rights organizations, in building effective partnerships with religious communities, in particular religious leaders, networks and local faith communities. That publication includes dozens of concrete UNICEF country office examples of collaborative work with religious communities, as well as strategies for effective engagement, planning, monitoring and evaluation. The publication has been translated into Arabic, French and Spanish.

49. As part of a multi-year partnership to strengthen the capacity of religious communities, particularly interreligious mechanisms to protect children affected by conflict, UNICEF and Religions for Peace continued to support country projects in Kenya, Liberia and the Philippines. They also convened a jointly organized consultation of key child protection and religious stakeholders together with the Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict in order to identify concrete actions and the guidance needed to strengthen the effectiveness of collaboration with religious communities.

50. In 2011, 37 UNICEF country offices participated in the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, an initiative which mobilizes religious leaders to promote children's rights on or around 20 November, with a focus on addressing violence against children, including emphasis on birth registration, positive disciplining and child marriage. Examples of UNICEF support included: in Afghanistan, the Ministry

of Haj and Religious Affairs conducted radio and television interviews with mullahs and used the occasion of Friday prayers to highlight messages on violence against children; in Panama, the Roman Catholic archbishop celebrated a nationally televised mass on the importance of a violence-free early childhood; and in Nigeria, a national workshop was held to engage key religious leaders as advocates for universal birth registration.

51. UNICEF country programmes continued to work with multi-religious structures and religious communities to promote the rights of children. For example, in Senegal, as part of a national advocacy and communication campaign against child maltreatment led by the Ministry of Family and Children, with the support of UNICEF, prominent Muslim religious leaders and networks conducted a study that highlighted the importance given to the protection and well-being of children in the Koran and other Islamic texts. During the month of Ramadan, religious channels on national television and radio discussed those issues to raise awareness of the negative consequences of child begging, exploitation and corporal punishment and to highlight the emphasis of the Koran on positive parenting, positive discipline, education and child protection. Those broadcasts included a call-in element to involve the public in the discussion.

52. In the Eastern Caribbean, various activities were undertaken with UNICEF technical or financial support in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Turks and Caicos Islands, engaging religious communities to address violence against children.

53. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the first national interreligious conference on the role of religion and religious leaders in combating violence against children was held on 19 and 20 October 2011; the focus of the conference was on corporal punishment in family and educational settings. The conference was organized with the support of UNICEF and in partnership with the country's judiciary and the Centre for Human Rights Studies at Mofid University. At the end of the conference, religious leaders issued a declaration that committed them to advocacy on the issues of violence against children and non-violent disciplining.

C. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

54. In 2011, the UNAIDS secretariat engaged in a number of activities to promote collaboration, dialogue and learning between communities that bring different perspectives and world views to the response to HIV, namely value-based, faith-based, religious, human rights-based and evidence-informed approaches. These approaches are highly synergistic and there are many areas where consensus exists or can be built. A range of activities to promote theological dialogue and learning on human rights, faith and HIV have taken place in collaboration with key partners, including the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, the Global Network of People Living with HIV, the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with and Affected by HIV and AIDS, the Government of Norway, ministries of religious affairs in a number of countries, the Anglican Communion, the United Nations System Staff College, Islamic Relief, UNFPA and UNDP. Activities have included a closed-door dialogue between theologians, people living with HIV and human rights experts. This was followed by: (a) the creation of an online dialogue space and the

development and piloting of a tool to enable country-level dialogue between these communities to continue; (b) a strategic exchange training for United Nations staff on working with faith and religion in health and development; (c) an interactive dialogue between UNAIDS staff and the Archbishop of Canterbury on HIV, faith and human rights; and (d) the creation of a coalition of faith-based groups to address gender-based violence at the country level.

55. Country- and regional-level dialogues have taken place around issues of marginalization and vulnerability relating to HIV. In each of these activities the UNAIDS secretariat has worked in collaboration with various partners in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the work. It has drawn three lessons from these endeavours.

56. First, there are many constituencies in the faith-based community that hold different views and perspectives on issues of health, HIV, sexuality and human rights. It is important that there is adequate space in the international policymaking arena to hear the voices of various faith-based constituencies, including the grass-roots faith communities and organizations working at the field level. This will help avoid polarization of the debate and promote constructive discussion on some very complex and sensitive issues. The United Nations should seek to promote and support the engagement of various faith-based constituencies in policymaking arenas and document and disseminate good practices.

57. Second, respectful dialogue between constituencies that appear to be in conflict can, if well-structured and facilitated, begin to change attitudes and stereotypes and lead to a willingness to collaborate on important issues, such as the provision of HIV-prevention materials and the protection of human rights for key populations at risk of HIV infection. The United Nations, in its capacity as a neutral broker, can and should continue to create space for and support this critical dialogue, including with the participation of religious leaders living with HIV.

58. Third, it is important to include from the outset a number of different partners, representing different constituencies and perspectives, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of HIV-related activities. This would include especially partners from different faith traditions, people living with HIV, religious leaders living with HIV, UNAIDS co-sponsoring agencies, academia and Government representatives. Areas of consensus and platforms for future collaborative action are more readily built if partners are a part of creating the consensus and the platforms and thus own the approach, than if they feel that these are imposed upon them by others.

D. World Bank

59. The World Bank has recognized, as have many other development actors, that faith-based organizations provide substantial education, health, social protection and other services in developing countries and that those services are often of better quality, better targeted to the poor and more cost-effective than public services. However, few in-depth studies have attempted to document more precisely the role of faith-based organizations at the country and regional levels. As part of a broader programme of work on faith and development, the World Bank recently completed a series of studies on faith-based providers of health and education services in sub-Saharan Africa.

60. Several findings have emerged from the studies. First, the market share of faith-based providers in service delivery, while perhaps smaller than often assumed, is substantial. For example, in a sample of 16 countries 11 per cent of primary students were found to attend faith-based schools; the proportion was 14 per cent for secondary education. Second, the data show that faith-based organizations tend to serve the poor much more than private secular providers do, and this is observed for both health and education. In absolute terms faith-based providers do not reach the poor more than other household groups, but in the absence of substantial State support in many countries, this is not surprising in view of the affordability barrier that various types of fees and other costs create. Yet, the data suggest that faith-based organizations make special efforts to reach the poor and other vulnerable groups. Third, faith-based organizations tend to have better satisfaction rates among their users than do public facilities. This is observed for both education and health care. In the case of education especially, parents sending their children to faith-based schools tend to place strong emphasis on religious education and values. Although this is the case for both Christian and Muslim schools, religious education in itself is highly valued in Muslim schools. Finally, there are also some interesting examples of collaboration between faith-based organizations of different denominations in the delivery of social services to the population.

E. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

61. In recognizing the central role that local religious communities play in the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless persons, UNHCR has long partnered with faith-based organizations, such as the Jesuit Refugee Services and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, at both the global and field levels. In the context of the crisis in Libya in 2011, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) acted swiftly to reinforce the emergency response capacity of UNHCR as the crisis unfolded, through the UNHCR-ICMC Resettlement Deployment Scheme. Also in 2011, UNHCR supported the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Government of Turkmenistan in the organization of an international ministerial conference in Ashgabat on the theme of "Refugees in the Muslim world". Representatives of more than 40 Governments and NGOs, including some faith-based organizations, participated in the meeting and contributed to the dialogue. The Ashgabat Declaration adopted at the close of the conference recognizes that Islamic law and precepts contain many of the elements of international refugee law.

62. UNHCR will host the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges on the theme of "Faith and protection", at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 12 and 13 December 2012. The Dialogue is based on the premise that common principles are shared by many faiths and are at the foundation of humanitarian action. The Dialogue will bring together spiritual and community leaders from a range of creeds in addition to representatives of Governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and scholars.

63. The Dialogue is aimed at fostering an exchange of views on the interrelated dimensions of faith, asylum and humanitarian principles. In addition to raising awareness and understanding, the Dialogue is expected to identify practical ways that religious communities and humanitarian organizations can work together to improve protection and assistance for refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons.

VI. Recognizing indigenous cultures

64. The dimension of indigenous cultures is a cross-cutting issue of the work carried out by the United Nations system to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as exemplified by the numerous references previously made to that issue in the present report. The work of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues helps in keeping such issues on the agenda and in giving them visibility. Several United Nations agencies have developed specific policies to address the needs of indigenous populations, while fostering respect for their cultures and promoting them as an engine for development. For example, FAO has a policy on indigenous and tribal people, which fully acknowledges cultural diversity and features among its basic principles self-determination, development with identity, participation and inclusion, and cultural rights.

65. In addition, during the period under review, UNICEF strengthened its research on the situation of indigenous children and youth. Examples of research that will be completed in 2012 include a study on sociocultural and legal institutions of indigenous peoples and their impact on the rights of children and women in the Republic of the Congo; the research is aimed at developing an appreciation of the social, cultural, spiritual and legal contexts of indigenous peoples at all stages of programming. The research will be conducted in partnership with UNFPA, UNESCO, UNDP and WHO. Research will also be carried out on violence against indigenous girls and adolescents in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America, and will include country-specific studies of Guatemala, Kenya and the Philippines in partnership with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UN-Women, UNFPA, WHO and ILO. In response to a recommendation of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, UNICEF will undertake a regional study on suicide among indigenous children and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean.

66. The World Bank has noted that, in spite of the high level of poverty among indigenous populations, until recently there was no global source that drew together the available evidence to assess the degree to which this situation holds across countries and over time. Furthermore, to date most of the research on the world's indigenous peoples has been concentrated on rich countries, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, and more recently in Latin America. Not only does that leave out some of the most populous and poorest areas of the world but it also ignores more than half the world's indigenous peoples.

67. To better assess the socioeconomic characteristics of indigenous peoples, the World Bank recently implemented a global study on those peoples. The term "indigenous peoples" was defined loosely for the study in order to be able to include groups that have many but not necessarily all of the characteristics traditionally associated with indigenous peoples. The analysis covered seven countries in depth, namely the Central African Republic, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam, which together account for 72 per cent of the world's indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. When combined with earlier case studies for five Latin American countries, the studies cover almost 80 per cent of the world's indigenous peoples. The results suggest that one third of indigenous peoples are poor, but in some countries indigenous poverty rates approach or exceed 50 per cent. As a result, although they make up roughly 4.5 per cent of the global population, indigenous peoples account

for about 10 per cent of the world's poor. Indigenous peoples also experience a schooling gap and they tend to be more vulnerable to shocks than other populations. Turning the situation around will require widespread and sustainable economic growth and reduction of poverty, along with strategies to address multiple sources of disadvantage in order to reach those who need a special lift.

68. UNDP has continued to promote sustainable development that respects the rights of indigenous peoples through its Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme or the inter-agency initiative to advance the rights of indigenous peoples, that is, the United Nations Indigenous Peoples' Partnership. Toolkits and guidelines produced by UNDP take into account the importance of considering culture as a key component for achieving human development. Through the thematic window on culture and development of the MDG Achievement Fund (see paras. 29-30 above), joint programmes implemented by UNDP and other United Nations agencies include activities such as the establishment of 23 schools of tolerance in Ecuador, where intercultural dialogue is integrated into the curriculum, as well as direct support for indigenous people and those of African descent in order to reduce discrimination and improve their access to basic services. In Honduras and Ecuador, the issues of cultural heritage, self-identification, the rights of indigenous people and those of African descent, equality and understanding have been fully integrated into the planning of policies and programmes, thereby facilitating access by these populations to cultural and other public goods and improving livelihoods based on local culture.

VII. Rights-based approach to intercultural and interreligious dialogue

69. General Assembly resolution 66/226 contains specific provisions on human rights and non-discrimination in the intercultural context. United Nations human rights machinery has continued to undertake relevant activities in this regard.

Activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

70. During the twentieth session of the Human Rights Council, on 29 June 2012, OHCHR organized a panel entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights in a multicultural context, including through combating xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance", pursuant to paragraph 3 of Council resolution 18/20. The panellists presented views and experiences on multiculturalism and how cultural differences should be addressed and diverse cultures accommodated at both the national and international levels.

71. The series of expert workshops organized by OHCHR in 2011 on freedom of expression and the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred dealt with relevant laws, policies and jurisprudence in countries in different regions. Strategic responses to incitement to hatred, both legal and non-legal in nature, were discussed. Since each of these workshops generated a wealth of information and a large number of practical suggestions for better implementation of relevant international human rights standards, OHCHR will convene a final expert meeting to take stock of these rich results. That meeting will be hosted by the Government of Morocco on 4 and 5 October 2012.

72. In March 2012, the Secretary-General endorsed the establishment of a United Nations network on racial discrimination and the protection of minorities. Coordinated by OHCHR, the network will enhance dialogue and cooperation between United Nations entities.

73. In 2012, the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities has provided an opportunity to create momentum for strengthened implementation of the Declaration and stronger engagement on minority rights generally. In this context, OHCHR is organizing a series of events marking the anniversary. During the nineteenth session of the Human Rights Council in early 2012, OHCHR organized a panel discussion to commemorate the anniversary by focusing in particular on the implementation of the Declaration, as well as on achievements, best practices and challenges in that regard. In collaboration with the Government of Austria, OHCHR also organized an expert seminar on "Enhancing the effectiveness of international, regional and national human rights mechanisms in protecting and promoting the rights of religious minorities". Held in Vienna on 22 and 23 May 2012, the seminar offered an opportunity to examine in depth how international and regional mechanisms could improve national implementation of key human rights recommendations in this field.

74. OHCHR organized its annual training programme for persons belonging to minorities in November and December 2011. The trained fellows have gained knowledge and skills in the field of international human rights in order to assist their organizations and communities in better protecting and promoting human and minority rights. In addition, the Office piloted, in 2011, the position of senior minority fellow, thereby offering to a person belonging to a minority the opportunity to work with OHCHR for a period of three months in order to gain relevant experience within the Office. The senior fellowship programme was extended for 2012.

75. In May 2012, OHCHR organized the second fellowship programme for people of African descent. The fellowship programme enabled the participants to enhance their understanding of the United Nations human rights system and share experience from different countries and regions. The fellows participated in the eleventh session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. They submitted a joint contribution for the experts' consideration with regard to the draft programme of action for the upcoming Decade for People of African Descent.

76. An arts festival was organized as part of the awareness-raising activities that took place during the second half of 2011 to commemorate the International Year for People of African Descent. A literary panel entitled "Artistic expressions: celebrating diversity, equality and non-discrimination", included the participation of authors of African descent from across the world. The panellists shared their vision and personal interpretation of justice and the promotion of equality, for which they have won critical acclaim. Additionally, an exhibition of the work of a Brazilian photographer, Walter Firmo, and a live music event with the participation of musicians from Brazil, Cuba, Rwanda, Senegal and Uruguay were also organized.

Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

77. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief held discussions with representatives of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance in

Strasbourg, France, on 7 December 2011, concerning the question of racial and religious hate speech. He attended a two-day meeting in Washington, D.C., on 12 December 2011, entitled the "Istanbul Process for Combating Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief". The meeting focused on concrete and positive measures that States can take to eliminate religious intolerance in the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief.

78. The Special Rapporteur, together with the Independent Expert on minority issues, attended the expert seminar held in Vienna on 22 and 23 May 2012 (see para. 73 above). He spoke about the protection of religious minorities under international human rights standards, including the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and articles 18, 26 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

79. In 2012, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights submitted a report to the Human Rights Council on the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications (A/HRC/20/26). In the report, it was noted that the right to science tends to be considered in isolation from the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community, to which it is usually juxtaposed in relevant instruments. The view of the Special Rapporteur was that those rights are inherently interlinked, since both relate to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding and to human creativity in a constantly changing world.

VIII. Conclusion

80. **The present report demonstrates the commitment by an increasing number of United Nations entities to fully take into account cultural dimensions in the broad sense of the phrase in their activities and policies. It is widely recognized that development should be considered through a cultural lens in order to better understand how to reach traditionally excluded groups and to obtain better results.**

81. **The promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue is interlinked with other important aspects of the work of the United Nations, such as the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as peacebuilding. Activities in these fields also necessarily intersect programmes in support of youth and indigenous populations. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is therefore one aspect of a broader problematique which is at the heart of United Nations work.**

82. **Given the proximity between intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the programme for a culture of peace, which are considered under the same agenda item, the Assembly may wish to streamline reporting requirements. A single report could be prepared that recognizes fully the interconnectedness of those issues and touches on their multiple dimensions.**